
Name of Organization: Onondaga County Council on Environmental Health

Type of Organization: County

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Division of Environmental Health

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Project Title: Beartrap Creek Reclamation

Project Category: Habitat (Ecological) Protection and Rest

Rank by Organization (if applicable): 0

Total Funding Requested (\$): 13,577 **Project Duration:** 1.5 Years

Abstract:

Beartrap Creek is a tributary of Ley Creek, one of five streams flowing into Onondaga Lake (HUC Code 04140201380) which have been seriously contaminated by conventional and industrial pollutants from the City of Syracuse and its near suburbs. This project will undertake a stream and watershed assessment of habitat conditions in Beartrap Creek, a C(T) classified trout stream located in the northern suburbs of the City of Syracuse which has been devoid of trout for decades due to urban/suburban development and construction of a major airport on what were previously farm fields.

The Council on Environmental Health, a volunteer citizen advisory group supported by staff assistance from the Onondaga County Health Department, has developed a two-phase proposal for the reclamation of Beartrap Creek, with participation by local, county and state interests, as well as citizen volunteers, school groups, and local conservation organizations. This project will provide funding for a two-phase program of stream and watershed assessment, followed by development and implementation of a watershed reclamation plan and program.

The first phase of the Beartrap Creek reclamation project will include a background investigation, initial trout stocking, a comprehensive stream and habitat assessment, and investigating various options for stream reclamation. A second phase of this project will form a Beartrap Creek Advisory Committee, develop a written stream and watershed reclamation plan, undertake outreach activities to develop public support for the project, and take action to implement the proposed remedial measures. The main objective of this project is to restore a viable trout population in a suburban stream - the Beartrap Creek tributary of Ley Creek, located in the Towns of Salina, Clay and Cicero in Onondaga County, New York.

Geographic Areas Affected by the Project

States:

<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New York
<input type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pennsylvania
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wisconsin
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ohio

Lakes:

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

Geographic Initiatives:

<input type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago	<input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio	<input type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair
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Primary Affected Area of Concern: Oswego River, NY

Other Affected Areas of Concern:

For Habitat Projects Only:

Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area: Eastern Lake Ontario

Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas: Onondaga Lake - regarded as one of the most polluted lakes in the nation, and a major source of numerous contaminants to Lake Ontario

Problem Statement:

Beartrap Creek's trout population has disappeared since the 1950's due to a combination of urban/suburban development and the discharge of chemical deicing compounds (mainly glycols) from the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. The streambed of the C(T) designated creek, which may have originally consisted of gravel and cobbles, has in recent years been covered with silt due to runoff from highway construction (I-81) and suburban development. Nevertheless, considerable portions of the stream corridor retain reasonably good tree cover, which serves to buffer the stream from temperature fluctuations.

Public interest in the trout fishery has waned over the years, and portions of the stream have been filled with tires, trash and debris. A particularly poor section of the Creek is the 'Airport Tributary', a stream section approximately one-half mile in length which discharges via a culvert from the Hancock Airport, and flows into Beartrap Creek near the US Rte. 11/I-81 intersection.

Interest in reclamation of the stream has been resurrected in recent years by the Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, which started volunteer monitoring of the stream in 1991, with assistance from students at two nearby schools. Construction of a \$10 million collection and treatment system for deicing fluids at Syracuse's Hancock Airport in the fall of 1996 was a major step forward in reducing the principal source of chemical and organic contamination to Beartrap Creek.

In spring of 1999, students from Liverpool High School stocked fingerling trout in Beartrap Creek as part of a school project, and the Onondaga County Department of Drainage and Sanitation has undertaken an ambient monitoring program for Ley Creek as part of the \$400 million Onondaga Lake reclamation plan. Current prospects for reclamation of Beartrap Creek are the best they have been in over half a century.

Proposed Work Outcome:

The proposed Beartrap Creek Reclamation project will provide a formal investigation of habitat conditions in Beartrap Creek, the stream corridor, and its surrounding watershed. It will expand upon the chemical and biological stream monitoring data collected by volunteers since 1991, in conjunction with an expanded long term ambient monitoring program for the Onondaga Lake tributaries being currently conducted by the Onondaga County Department of Drainage and Sanitation.

Following an investigation of available stream reclamation measures by county agencies, NYSDEC fishery biologists, and citizen volunteers (including members of the local chapter of Trout Unlimited), a comprehensive stream and watershed reclamation plan will be developed to include proposed remedial measures. A Beartrap Creek Advisory Committee will be formed to develop public support for project implementation, and to solicit necessary funding to undertake stream reclamation measures.

Implementation of the proposed stream and watershed remedial measures will be conducted through the combined

efforts of the Advisory Committee, citizen volunteers, local and county government, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Project Milestones:	Dates:
Project Start: Background investigation	06/2000
Stocking of trout fingerlings	06/2000
Stream habitat assessment	10/2000
Investigate remedial measures	12/2000
Form Beartrap Creek Advisory Committee	03/2001
Develop reclamation plan	06/2001
Develop public support and solicit funds	09/2001
Project End: Implement remedial measures	12/2001

☒ Project Addresses Environmental Justice

If So, Description of How:

A former trout stream which was classified C(T) in the 1950's, Beartrap Creek has retained this classification despite loss of its trout population due to construction of an Interstate highway (I-81) adjacent to the stream, and contaminated runoff from both Hancock Airport (operated by the City of Syracuse) and an adjacent airport operated by the US Air National Guard.

This project will initiate a comprehensive watershed assessment and planning process that intends to reclaim this former trout stream by actively involving a coalition of local citizens, conservation organizations, local, county and state officials, school groups and other stakeholders.

☒ Project Addresses Education/Outreach

If So, Description of How:

The Izaak Walton League's Central New York Chapter has worked with citizen volunteers and two area schools to collect biological and chemical data on water quality in Beartrap Creek since 1991. The CNY Chapter has also coordinated stream cleanups of Beartrap Creek in conjunction with Earth Day activities sponsored by OCCRA, Onondaga County Executive Nicholas Pirro, and area legislators from the Town of Salina.

Volunteer education and outreach activities planned for this project include:

- * forming a Beartrap Creek Advisory Committee consisting of citizen volunteers and informed local and county officials
- * developing public support for project implementation, and soliciting the public and area industries for donations to support stream reclamation measures
- * continue volunteer monitoring of stream water quality, involving student volunteers from Liverpool High School and Roxboro Middle School, which owns land adjacent to the creek
- * maintain a record of collected water quality data at a website hosted by SUNY-ESF and Syracuse University School of Education (www.livingschoolbook.com/watershed)
- * stock fingerling trout raised by students at Liverpool High School, and monitor survival with assistance from NYSDEC and Onondaga County Sanitation Department's ambient stream monitoring program.

Project Budget:

	Federal Share Requested (\$)	Applicant's Share (\$)
Personnel:	7,000	0
Fringe:	2,135	0
Travel:	150	150
Equipment:	0	400
Supplies:	450	450
Contracts:	0	0
Construction:	0	1,000
Other:	1,400	2,000
Total Direct Costs:	11,135	4,000
Indirect Costs:	2,442	0
Total:	13,577	4,000
Projected Income:	0	1,000

Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):

ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF DRAINAGE AND SANITATION (DDS)

The Department of Drainage and Sanitation is presently conducting an Ambient Monitoring Program of Onondaga Lake tributaries as part of the nearly \$400 million Onondaga Lake Reclamation Project. As a local contribution to the Beartrap Creek Reclamation Project, the Department will expand its fisheries surveys to include electric fish shocking and identification activities in the Beartrap Creek tributary of Ley Creek.

Dollar commitment (local match) = \$500

NYS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (NYSDEC - CORTLAND)

DEC Regional Fisheries Manager Leslie Wedge has a strong interest in returning a viable coldwater fishery to Beartrap Creek, which is classified by the Department as a C(T) trout stream. The Cortland Regional office of DEC will provide technical assistance, stocking guidelines, and equipment for electric shocking, if necessary, as a contribution to this program. They are also the review agency for approval of proposed in-stream reclamation measures recommended under this project.

Dollar commitment (local match) = \$500

CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS:

Citizen groups who have contributed volunteers, or have expressed interest in the Beartrap Creek Reclamation Project include: Central New York Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America; Project Watershed CNY/Save Our Streams Consortium; and Iroquois Chapter, Trout Unlimited. Trout Unlimited has volunteered to assist with a Rosgen physical analysis of the stream, and in soliciting donations of materials and equipment to install stream improvement structures such as log booms and stone rip-rap in order to create trout habitat.

Dollar commitment donations (anticipated) = \$1,000; Volunteer time (monitor & restoration) = \$2,000+

Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:

The reclamation of Beartrap Creek is an ongoing project, although no formal plan has been prepared to date for restoration of trout in this relatively small stream.

Following complaints about pollution of this stream from local citizens and the Izaak Walton League's CNY Chapter, NYSDEC amended the SPDES permit for the City of Syracuse to require the design and construction of a new treatment facility to collect and decontaminate aircraft deicing fluids used on airplanes at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Construction of a \$10 million glycol treatment facility by the City of Syracuse in fall of 1996 is the greatest single contributor to improved water quality in Beartrap Creek.

Public support for the cleanup of Beartrap Creek was initiated by volunteer stream monitoring efforts begun in 1991, with participation by students at Liverpool High School and Roxboro Middle School in Mattydale. The Town of Salina cleaned up a dump site near the Hancock Airport culvert in the mid- 1990's, and major stream cleanups were conducted in the 'Airport Tributary' of Beartrap Creek in 1998 and 1999, coordinated by the CNY Chapter, Izaak Walton League.

Support for the Beartrap Creek reclamation project has been expressed by NYSDEC Regional Fisheries Manager Leslie Wedge, Joseph Mastriano of the Onondaga County Department of Drainage and Sanitation, and Peter Gray, president of the Iroquois Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Trout Unlimited members intend to analyze Beartrap Creek with a Rosgen stream type analysis, and they plan to help with soliciting project donors and with implementation of appropriate stream reclamation measures.